

## **Fast facts: About human needs & inequality in North Carolina**

### **Between 2000 and 2004, North Carolina experienced the following:**

- A sharp drop in median household income.
- A steady rise in the poverty rate.
- A jump in the share of uninsured residents.

### **Income**

- Median household income, adjusted for inflation, has fallen by \$2,806 or 6.7 percent since 2000.[\[1\]](#)
- 27 percent of workers earn less than \$9.28 per hour, the amount needed to lift a family of four above the federal poverty line.[\[2\]](#)
- Personal bankruptcy filings increased by 35.5 percent between 2000 and 2004.[\[3\]](#)

### **Poverty**

- 1.2 million North Carolinians – 15.7 percent of the state's population – live in poverty.[\[4\]](#)
- 21.2 percent of all Tar Heel families with children younger than age five are poor.[\[5\]](#)
- One of every five Tar Heel children lives in poverty.[\[6\]](#)
- In 2003, 13 percent of whites, 32 percent of blacks and 38 percent of Hispanics were poor.[\[7\]](#)

### **Housing**

- 40.9 percent of renters and 29.7 percent of owners are housing burdened, meaning they spend at least 30 percent of their incomes on housing costs.[\[8\]](#)
- Foreclosure filings nearly tripled from 15,000 to 44,000 between 1998 and 2004.[\[9\]](#)

### **Health**

- 1.3 million North Carolinians – 16.5 percent of the state's population – lack health insurance.[\[10\]](#)
- North Carolina had the nation's ninth highest teen pregnancy rate in 2002.[\[11\]](#)

### **Children**

- 27,597 children currently are waiting for a child care subsidy.[\[12\]](#)
- 30,016 children were substantiated as victims of child abuse and neglect in 2003.[\[13\]](#)

- One-quarter of secondary students smoked in 2003.[\[14\]](#)

### **Public Education**

- Over one-third of high-school students fail to graduate four years after starting school.[\[15\]](#)
- Minority students have a 50-50 chance of graduating high school on time.[\[16\]](#)

### **Hunger**

- The percentage of Tar Heels lacking enough food for their family for an entire month rose from 9.8 percent to 13.7 percent between 1996-98 and 2001-03.[\[17\]](#)

### **HIV/AIDS**

- 25,000 people in North Carolina have HIV/AIDS with African Americans accounting for 71 percent of the infected.[\[18\]](#)
- North Carolina has the nation's most restrictive eligibility criteria for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program. People who make more than \$11,600 per year are denied help to buy medicine that costs \$13,000 a year. Every state that borders North Carolina has an eligibility threshold almost three times higher. [\[19\]](#)

### **Mental Health**

- North Carolina does not require all health insurers to cover mental illnesses like physical illnesses.[\[20\]](#)

### **Prisons**

- The average prison population in 2004 equaled 35,098 – a 66.9 percent increase over 1993.[\[21\]](#)
- African-Americans account for almost 60 percent of the prison population but only about 21 percent of the overall population.[\[22\]](#)
- The typical adult entering the prison system in 2004 could read at a ninth-grade level and perform math at a seventh-grade level.[\[23\]](#)

### **Taxes**

- State and local taxes consumed 10.9 percent of the incomes of the poorest 20 percent of taxpayers but 6.3 percent of the incomes of the richest one percent of taxpayers.[\[24\]](#)

### **Workforce Readiness**

- Two-thirds of North Carolina's prime-age workers (ages 25-54) lack any kind of post-secondary degree or credential.[\[25\]](#)

- One of every two North Carolinians over age 16 is deficient in basic literacy skills.[26]
- 70 percent of young adults (ages 18-24) were *not* pursuing post-secondary education in 2003.[27]

*Prepared for the A.J. Fletcher Foundation by NC Policy Watch ([www.ncpolicywatch.com](http://www.ncpolicywatch.com)) and the NC Budget and Tax Center ([www.ncjustice.org](http://www.ncjustice.org)). Update by John Quintero.*

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- [1] U.S. Census Bureau, 2004 American Community Survey.
- [2] Economic Policy Institute, analysis of 2004 Current Population Survey.
- [3] American Bankruptcy Institute.
- [4] U.S. Census Bureau, 2004 Current Population Survey. Poverty thresholds in 2004 were the following: one-person family = \$9,645; two-person family = \$12,234; three-person family = \$15,067; four-person family = \$19,307.
- [5] U.S. Census Bureau, 2004 American Community Survey.
- [6] Ibid.
- [7] The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.
- [8] U.S. Census Bureau, 2004 American Community Survey.
- [9] NC Administrative Office of the Courts.
- [10] U.S. Census Bureau, 2004 Current Population Survey.
- [11] *The Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of NC*
- [12] NC Division of Child Development, 31 July 2005
- [13] NC Child Advocacy Institute and NC Institute of Medicine.
- [14] Ibid.
- [15] The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, May 2005.
- [16] Ibid.
- [17] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Household Food Insecurity in the U.S. 2003.
- [18] NC Department of Health and Human Services.
- [19] Ibid.
- [20] National Mental Health Association
- [21] Web site of NC Department of Correction, Office of Research and Planning.
- [22] Ibid. and U.S. Census Bureau
- [23] NC Department of Correction
- [24] Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy.
- [25] Population Reference Bureau, analysis of 2003 American Community Survey.
- [26] North Carolina Literacy Center, 1998.
- [27] Population Reference Bureau, analysis of 2003 American Community Survey.